



HEALTH AFFAIRS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301-1200

MAY 13 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS AND TRICARE MANAGEMENT
ACTIVITY STAFF

SUBJECT: Message from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs

Six months ago I wrote to you to describe my near term priorities upon assuming the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. I am pleased with the progress and accomplishments of the past six months.

We have accomplished much in the area of Force Health Protection and medical readiness, where I have devoted a considerable portion of my time towards developing needed policies and establishing new relationships across the government. I am confident that these activities are crucial to our national efforts to remain prepared and vigilant for contingencies in a post-September 11th environment.

We also have our initial business plan for working in concert with the Military Departments to meet specific goals in FY 02: improve Force Health Protection and Readiness, improve TRICARE, work collaboratively with external agencies and the Congress, and address issues in recruitment and retention of military medical personnel. I have attached to this message a copy of our updated plan for your use in setting your own goals and priorities that are consistent and synchronized throughout the organization. Soon we will finalize business rules which will describe the process of making decisions in the Military Health System.

I am proud of the new team now assembled in key leadership positions within the Military Health System: Mr. Ed Wyatt, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs); Ms. Ellen Embrey, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Health Protection and Readiness); Mr. Nelson Ford, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Budgets and Programs); and Dr. David Tornberg, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Clinical and Program Policy). Each of these individuals bring specific areas of expertise that are critical to our success, as well as creativity and energy, and together with Mr. Tom Carrato, Executive Director of the TRICARE Management Activity, form a highly experienced and quality-driven team that is well-suited for and welcomes the challenges before us. I know you join me in extending a warm welcome and support to each of them.

Members of the senior leadership team in HA and TMA recently concluded an off-site planning meeting during which appropriate updates were made to our business plan for FY 02. I used the opportunity to share my vision for our organization, which I also want to share with you.


First and foremost, I see the Military Health System as one organization, and I ask that you join me in promulgating that vision in all our work. Although we work within established organizational boundaries, such as the size of the OSD headquarters, we must integrate our effort across three medical Service departments. I am convinced that we can work together more effectively in the future. Throughout government, as we leverage outsourcing and technology, organizations are more closely mirroring corporate structures in order to work more effectively. Similarly, my desire is for a corporate leadership group for HA/TMA, comprised of both military unique functions such as Force Health Protection and Readiness, and a Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Medical Officer and Chief Information Officer. In the near future I will issue written guidance describing staff components within HA/TMA that will be functionally accountable to one another in support of critical functions such as quality, financial management and performance measurement. Effective accomplishment of our mission requires not only teamwork, but clear lines of authority and reporting. To that end, I have recently announced the establishment of the Deployment Health Support Office, the expansion of its mission and permanent alignment of accountability through the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Health Protection and Readiness).

Second, I am committed to working closely with the Military Departments in both the development of policy and the execution of our mission. I have asked the DASDs and the Executive Director, TMA to ensure that our business plan represents the integrated efforts of our staff and the Military Departments. We perform adequately, compared with historical norms, but we can do much better. My vision is for a more integrated military health system, with all parts pulling in the same direction toward the goals and objectives of our annual business plan. We will soon launch a more detailed, intensive longer term strategic planning process that will help cement these relationships. Before August of this year, I expect this effort to produce an outstanding plan for FY 03. Our plans will continue to refine and reinforce the measures that I will use to continuously monitor our progress.

Third, I am committed to continuous improvement in the performance of the Military Health System. This involves not only measurement of the system performance, but also comparisons across our system internally and with external and private sector benchmarks. Accountability needs to be clear for performance improvements, and creativity in solving problems must be rewarded.

Finally, as we move forward we all must be willing to embrace change. This includes not only improvement in major goal areas such as our TRICARE contracts and medical readiness, but also finding better ways to organize work, and to use and leverage the capabilities of information technology.

I am grateful for your support over the past six months. Much work remains in the near term, specifically in the finalization of our new TRICARE contracts and regional structure, as well as in the ever-broadening horizons of homeland defense. We will achieve important goals in these areas, while being ever vigilant over the clinical and financial integrity of this great Military Health System. I welcome your ideas as we go forward, and plan to continue to meet with you and learn more about the specific talents clearly evident throughout the organization.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William Winkenwerder, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Winkenwerder, Jr., MD